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McKean County Biodynamics

Featuring Master Gardener L.A. Rotheraine

SUCCESS STORY

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Talk about a win-win situation.

Kim Benjamin, executive director of the Bradford City Water Authority, tells us about how Bradford has become a model for other cities in transforming barren ground into fields of winter wheat, oats, fescue and rye grasses.

Kim writes to us, enclosing a copy of a report on the McKean County Fair which recognized the ongoing success of Bradford's Evergreen Elm and their biodynamic gardening techniques. Once again they dominated the vegetable category with 29 ribbons out of 29 entries, he noted.

Our connection to Evergreen Elm is through Master Gardener, L.A. Rotheraine. L.A. has been instrumental in assisting the authority in successfully establishing growth of winter wheat, oats, fescue and rye grasses on previously barren ground, Kim writes.

BEFORE

AFTER

Just about fair time, he notes, the water authority made a formal presentation at the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association conference in Hershey in regard to the ongoing success of its land reclamation projects on the Bradford watershed.

In the city's project, residual waste from the water treatment process is used as a soil base.

It is combined with yard waste from Bradford City's leaf pickup.

The result is that a vibrant turf has evolved at selected sites, Kim tells us.

Unimpeded by this year's dry, arid summer and with no commercial fertilizers, Rotheraine's liquid compost preparations have produced healthy grasses that shall benefit a variety of wildlife which inhabits the watershed," he adds.

Since 1996, the authority has been operating under a Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection permit to reclaim barren land and at the same time dispose of water treatment residual waste.

This environmentally friendly method has proven not just beneficial to wildlife and the watershed, but to Bradford water customers wallets as well, Kim reports.

Conventional disposal runs as high as $70 per cubic yard to dewater, process and haul residuals to a landfill, and tipping fees. By comparison, the land application costs run just under $29 per cubic yard. Thus, this year's 5,000 cubic yard project has saved $215,000 compared to conventional disposal.

Since Bradford City Water Authority started using this environmentally friendly disposal technique back in 1996, many water systems statewide have worked with Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to be permitted for land reclamation.

Agronomist & Master Gardener
L.A. Rotheraine
Displays Healthy Root Systems

Editor's Note: L.A. Rotheraine is a writer, lecturer and award-winning biodynamic gardener in Bradford, PA.

This waste management system realizes a dream of Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, biodynamic pioneer. Dr. Pfeiffer spent many years developing a recycling method but was unable at the time (the 1950's and 60's) to convince municipalities of his method. It is to the credit of Evergreen Elm's courageous Board of Directors (Fred Proper Chairman) and CEO (Mary Williams) that they had the foresight to adopt this most sophisticated yet little known agricultural system.

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